

CIA Is Still In Guatemala, Officials Say

*Christopher Remark
On Funding Corrected*

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The CIA is still paying informers in the Guatemalan military and has a post at the U.S. Embassy there, contrary to a statement Sunday by Secretary of State Warren Christopher that no CIA money was being spent in the Central American country, U.S. officials said yesterday.

Meanwhile, in the snowballing CIA-Guatemala controversy, House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) said a Democratic House member who recently revealed that a CIA informer was linked to two murders in Guatemala should resign from the House Select Committee on Intelligence.

Gingrich called the actions of Rep. Robert G. Torricelli (D-N.J.) "totally unacceptable" because intelligence panel members are sworn to keep classified information secret.

Torricelli said he received the information from government sources outside the committee and made a point of not attending House panel meetings where discussion of Central America occurred. "An oath of confidentiality cannot be expanded to muzzle members of Congress from exposing criminal activity," Torricelli said.

Gingrich also said the CIA should be expanded because of terrorists' activities and international uncertainty in the post-Cold War era. That put him sharply at odds with the agency's critics, including some

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prominent Democrats, who have called for shrinking or even abolishing the CIA.

The dispute came nearly two weeks after Torricelli revealed that the CIA knew one of its paid informers, a Guatemalan army colonel, had had a hand in the murders of an American innkeeper and a Guatemalan guerrilla leader married to a U.S. lawyer. Torricelli also charged that the CIA had kept the information from other U.S. government officials who were attempting to provide accounts to the victims' relatives.

The revelations prompted a flood of allegations about the CIA's activities in Guatemala and caused President Clinton to order a government-wide investigation of intelligence activities in that country.

The fact that the CIA involvement in Guatemala now under review occurred largely during the presidencies of Ronald Reagan and George Bush has Republican members expressing unease about the probe.

U.S. officials who corrected Christopher's remarks said an unspecified amount of CIA money, reported by one source to be thousands of dollars annually, was being spent in Guatemala. It goes to maintain the CIA station at the U.S. embassy and to pay for "liaison relationships" with individual members of the Guatemalan military, a term commonly used to describe payments to informers.

The officials said the informers have been instrumental in helping the Clinton administration gain a fuller understanding of the circumstances surrounding the deaths of innkeeper Michael DeVine and guerrilla fighter Efraim Bamaca Velasquez, who was married to American Jennifer Harbury.

Christopher, who spoke on CBS-TV's "Face the Nation" on Sunday, declined three times to give a "yes-or-no" answer to questions about CIA funding. But he then stated, "I'm satisfied there's no money going down there now, that's right."

Officials said Christopher had mis-spoken and explained that he had intended his remark to mean that the agency had halted expenditures for covert action under a presidential finding, signed years ago but halted in 1994 when all such covert action programs in Central America were ended.

Christopher and White House na-

tional security adviser Anthony Lake subsequently asked that a study be done to verify that the remark was correct, only to learn yesterday of the continuing expenditures.

Gingrich, speaking to reporters at a breakfast meeting, said the CIA should be restructured, reformed and expanded.

"Terrorists will be causing more damage," he said, referring to the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York by Muslim fundamentalists. People "will want to know why we don't pursue these terrorist groups. . . . We have an absolute obligation to find out."

Gingrich spokesman Tony Blankley said the speaker agrees that a restructuring must take place and that "we need to be prepared to have a high level of human intelligence in order to be able to protect Americans from the sort of dangers we saw in Japan recently."

Blankley said Gingrich believes Torricelli's revelations will destroy the confidence the intelligence community needs that committee members will guard their secrets. The oversight committee, in turn, he said, needs their confidence "to effectively monitor" intelligence agency activities.

Blankley said the distinction Torricelli is drawing between information obtained in the committee and information obtained independent of it "is unacceptable" because the public distribution of data from either will dampen CIA confidence in committee members.

Blankley said Gingrich believes

the actual allegations Torricelli made against the CIA should be investigated.

In response to the speaker's statement, Torricelli said, "I cannot believe Mr. Gingrich is more outraged by my revealing the CIA's links to the murders than he is about the CIA allowing these families to suffer all these years. It's a peculiar sense of duty."

Torricelli told intelligence committee staff members, the White House and the National Security Council that he was going to go public with his allegations. Yesterday he said Gingrich's statements "makes it more uncomfortable for people with knowledge of criminal activities to come forward."

The Senate Intelligence Committee will hold an unusual public hearing on the matter Wednesday, with testimony from Harbary and acting CIA director William Studeman.